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COLORS AND MARKINGS OF

# CARRIER AIR WING ONE

F-4 PHANTOM UNITS



The story of CVW-1 Phantom units begins as early as 1963. At that point CVW-1 was designated Carrier Air Group One (CVG-1). The wing was assigned to USS Franklin D. Roosevelt (CVA-42) and consisted of two fighter squadrons: VF-14 "Tophatters" flying F-3B Demon and VF-11 "Red Rippers" flying F-8E Crusader.



*Figur 1: F-3B Demon of VF-14 "Tophatters", CVG-1, 1963*

On Apr. 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1963, CVG-1 returned from a deployment to the Mediterranean Sea. Upon return the Tophatters began transitioning to the far more capable F-4 Phantom, that were recently introduced to frontline service. VF-14s first deployment lasted from Nov. 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1963 to Dec. 21<sup>st</sup>, 1963 and took the wing out on sea trails close to home port. On Dec. 20<sup>th</sup>, 1963 CVG-1 was redesignated to CVW-1, and that's where this story will take its beginning.

## 1964-1965

### **Deployment:**

*Jan. 17<sup>th</sup>, 1964 to Mar. 8<sup>th</sup>, 1964 (Guantanamo Bay)*  
*Apr. 28<sup>th</sup>, 1964 to Dec. 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1964 (Mediterranean Sea)*  
*Jun. 28<sup>th</sup>, 1965 to Dec. 17<sup>th</sup>, 1965 (Mediterranean Sea)*  
*USS F.D. Roosevelt (CVA-42)*



*Figur 2: F-4B Phantom of VF-14 "Tophatters", CVW-1, 1964, Modex #113, BuNo 149416. F-4B Phantom of VF-14 "Tophatters", CVW-1, 1964, Modex #100, BuNo 149448*

The first paint scheme worn by the F-4Bs in service with VF-14 wore a paint scheme very similar to the F-3B Demons that were phased out in 1963. A few things is worth noticing about this paint scheme, that makes it stand out from what would eventually become standard for Phantoms in Fleet service. The first thing that's worth noticing is the ejection seat warning triangles, which are considerably smaller than what would become standard the following year (see 1966-1967). The ejection seat triangles were the "old style" whites with red boarder and red text, that were used up until about 1967. What also is worth noticing is the Neutral metal leading edges on the intake, wing and wing tank. Also notice the lack of walkways on the intakes and on the wingroot. The aircraft carrier name on the aft fuselage lacks F.D., which seems to be the case for all the aircraft in the squadron. The placement of the last four digits of the BuNo, may seem unusual, but for the period a common feature. As illustrated below, the BuNo would later be found on the fuselage. Apart from that the red trim color that's assigned to aircraft with modex numbers in the 1xx-range, are on the fin cap as the standard dictates, just as the flash on the intake is red. The CAG bird has the multicolored bands across the rudder, but apart from that it's identical to the rest of the squadrons aircraft.

In the early days of the F-4 Phantoms service life, all aircraft of the squadron were structurally identical: With the AN/AAA-4 infra red seeker chinpod and the "clean" horizontal stabilizers, as opposed to the later slotted configuration.

## 1966-1967

### **Deployment:**

*Jan. 24<sup>th</sup>, 1966 to Feb. 10<sup>th</sup>, 1966 (Caribbean)*

*Apr. 15<sup>th</sup>, 1966 to May 27<sup>th</sup>, 1966 (Guantanamo Bay)*

*Jun. 21<sup>st</sup>, 1966 to Feb. 21<sup>st</sup>, 1967 (Gulf of Tonkin)*

*USS F.D. Roosevelt (CVA-42)*



*Figur 3: F-4B Phantom of VF-14 "Tophatters", CVW-1, 1966. Modex #101 BuNo 152327 (note! AN/APR-24 chin pod and APR-24 fin cap), F-4B Phantom of VF-14 "Tophatters", CVW-1, 1966. Modex #110 BuNo 150635) (note! The strike markings on the splitter plate)*



*Figur 4: F-8D Crusader of VF-32 "Swordsmen", CVW-3, 1965, Modex #201, BuNo 148710. F-4B Phantom of VF-32 "Swordsmen", CVW-1, Modex #200 BuNo 152314 (note! AN/APR-24 chin pod and APR-24 fin cap). F-4B Phantom of VF-32 "Swordsmen", CVW-1, Modex #208, BuNo 152312 (note! The early AN/AAA-4 chinpod housing, at this time no longer housing the infrared seeker, but rather RHAW/ECM equipment)*

For the Tophatters deployments in 1966 and 1967 new aircraft were received (in the BuNo 150xxx and 152xxx range). Few changes were made to the paint scheme, all of them quite subtle. The modex number would now be shadowed with white, The Ejection seat warning triangle were now much larger (and some aircraft would feature the new style eject seat triangle, and seen on the illustration of Modex #110). The aircraft carrier name was now written as USS F.D.Roosevelt just ahead of the last four digits of the BuNo, which had been moved from the vertical stabilizer to the aft fuselage. The tailcode had slightly increased in size. What is most interesting for this period is perhaps that some (if not all), the Phantom the BuNo 152xxx-range would be upgraded with the AN/APR-24 chin pod, which later were upgraded with the APR-24 fin cap. It appears as the aircraft that had that update didn't have the red trim color on its fin cap. An example of the AN/APR-24 upgrade is seen on the illustration of modex #101.

The aircraft in the 150xxx range seemed to differ from the APR-24 upgraded aircraft in having the red fin cap, but also the walkways on the intake. In this case the walkways were grey with a black edge. These aircraft also retained the AN/AAA-4 chin pod, however without the infrared seeker inside.

The radar domes seemed to be present in both white, radar dome tan and black. The strike markings seen on Modex #110 was a common occurrence all the aircraft in the squadron during their sole deployment in the Gulf of Tonkin.

CVW-1's second fighter squadron had, until the deployment to the Gulf of Tonkin, been VF-11 "Red Rippers" flying the F-8E Crusader. As The Red Rippers were transitioning to F-4B Phantoms, they would become assigned to CVW-17, that meant CVW-1 were short of a fighter squadron. VF-32 "Swordsmen" were operating F-8D Crusaders and were assigned to CVW-3 flying off USS Saratoga (CVA-60), and were due to transfer to the F-4 Phantom. The transition from the F-8D Crusader to the F-4B Phantom took place between Sep. 12<sup>th</sup>, 1965 and Dec. 15<sup>th</sup>, 1965, with the squadron being assigned to CVW-1 on Dec. 1<sup>st</sup>, 1965.

The paint scheme on the VF-32 F-4B Phantoms were strikingly similar in style, to those worn by the VF-14 aircraft, but of course, with a yellow trim color. There were however differences, the red intake flash had been replaced by the VF-32 sword on the fuselage spine. But more subtle differences were also present: The tailcode had a different layout on the Swordsmen aircraft and the CVW-1 ribbon seem to be smaller than what were applied to the VF-14 birds. Another distinctive feature of the VF-32 aircraft is the text that's applied to the rudder. "F Troop" was a sitcom that had premiered in 1965, the reason for why the title was applied to the rudder can only be speculated, but it appears to have been applied to all the squadrons aircraft with the exception of the CAG bird. Notice also the strike markings on the splitter plate, and notice the unusually large ejection seat warning triangles present on Modex #208. The CAG bird depicted here have (like Modex #101), been equipped with AN/APR-24 (the aircraft in VF-32 that were upgraded with the AN/APR-24 were also in the BuNo 152xxx range). Like VF-14 The aircraft that had this upgrade wouldn't have the trimcolor to the tip of the vertical stabilizer. Other than that the CAG bird had similar marking as the rest of the squadrons aircraft (with the exception of the multicolored bands on the rudder), one thing that may have been applied later on is the last 4 digits of the BuNo that would usually be applied to the fuselage just above the exhaust. On this aircraft, they are missing. The ejection seat warning triangles, were standard of this time, and thus it seems like there were two different styles within the same squadron.

## 1967-1968

### **Deployment:**

*Aug. 27<sup>th</sup>, 1967 to May 19<sup>th</sup>, 1968 (Mediterranean Sea)  
USS F.D. Roosevelt (CVA-42)*



*Figur 5: F-4B Phantom of VF-14 "Tophatters", CVW-1, 1967. Modex #108 BuNo 152312*



*Figur 6: F-4B Phantom of VF-32 "Swordsmen", CVW-1, 1967. Modex #201 BuNo 151401*

Upon returning from the deployment to the Gulf of Tonkin, CVW-1 would stay ashore for a few month until again embarking on a deployment aboard USS F.D. Roosevelt (CVA-42). This deployment would be the very last deployment for the wing aboard CVA-42. For unknown reasons only very limited photo reference have been obtainable. The reference that could be found however suggests that the VF-14 aircraft for a part of the deployment would sport this "Plain Jane" paint scheme. The cruisebook however depicts aircraft with the red chevron on the intake, so it's quite possible that the chevron was present for at least some part of the deployment. VF-32s F-4Bs saw very little change to their paint scheme, most remarkable was the radar dome where no longer black/white or tan, but gull grey over white just as the rest of the aircraft. This would become common later in the Phantoms service period, but at this time, it was quite unusual. VF-32s CAG bird (BuNo 152969) were similar in style to the previous deployment, and is not depicted here for the same reason. The chinpod was yet again the AN/AAA-4 housing on all aircraft in both squadrons. The stabilator were now beginning to be replaced with the slotted stabilator, as seen on the illustrations of both Modex #108 and #201

## 1968-1969

### **Deployment:**

*Nov. 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1968 to Dec. 16<sup>th</sup>, 1968 (Shakedown cruise)*

*Feb. 17<sup>th</sup>, 1969 to Mar. 18<sup>th</sup>, 1969 (West Atlantic)*

*Apr. 5<sup>th</sup>, 1969 to Dec. 21<sup>st</sup>, 1969 (Mediterranean Sea)*

*USS John F. Kennedy (CVA-67)*



*Figur 7: F-4B Phantom of VF-14 "Tophatters", CVW-1, 1968. Modex #112, BuNo 152293, F-4B Phantom of VF-14 "Tophatters", CVW-1, 1968. Modex #100, BuNo 152246*

In late 1968 CVW-1 became embarked aboard USS John F. Kennedy (CVA-67), which was commissioned on Sep. 7<sup>th</sup>, 1968. USS F.D. Roosevelt (CVA-42) was due to a scheduled modernization at the Norfolk shipyard, and would be back in service in the summer of 1969 with CVW-6 aboard.

For VF-14 1968 would be the first time their paint scheme would be redone in it's entirety. Most noticeably this meant the chevron on the intake had gone, and that the iconic tophat had moved to the tail. There were some experimentation with a fancy layout of the tailcode, which was applied to at least 4 of the squadrons aircraft (Modex #100, #102 #105 and #112), but this was abandoned for a more traditional slanted tailcode as seen on the illustration above. It is unknown if all the aircraft in the squadron had that tailcode style applied. What also is worth noticing is that the CVW-1 ribbon have gone, leaving only the wing designation at the fin cap of the CAG bird. The multicolored CAG markings was naturally only applied to Modex #100, but was not removed when the tailcode style changed. The illustration depicts the CAG bird as it appeared on the later deployments of this era.

Structurally the aircraft of the squadron had also changed. The Shoehorn updates had been introduced and the squadron would operate both the AN/ALQ-30 style chin pod (as illustrated on Modex #112) and the AN/ALE-25 chin pod which it shared with the USAF F-4Ds (illustrated on Modex #100).

The Swordsmen held on to their previous paint scheme and didn't make any changes except for the carrier name on the fuselage spine which was changed to USS John F. Kennedy in the same

fashion as VF-14 had done. Structurally they followed the same shoehorn upgrade as VF-14 did and had aircraft with both AN/ALQ-30 and AN/ALE-25 chin pods in the squadron.

### 1970-1971

#### **Deployment:**

*Sep. 14<sup>th</sup>, 1970 to Mar. 1<sup>st</sup>, 1971 (Mediterranean Sea)  
USS John F. Kennedy (CVA-67)*



*Figur 8: F-4B Phantom of VF-14 "Tophatters", CVW-1, 1971. Modex #100 BuNo 152208*



*Figur 9: F-4B Phantom of VF-32 "Swordsmen", CVW-1, 1971, Modex #200, BuNo 152972*

For VF-14 little changed from 1969, infact the only thing was altered was the CAG birds multicolored stripes on the rudder that changed from small squares to chevrons. The story was quite different for the Swordsmen! This would mark the year of the first major update to their paint scheme. An additional sword had appeared on the rudder of the aircraft, the vertical stabilizer had a large black/yellow chevron, and the tailcode was unusually slanted upwards and backward and had a white shadow. All the aircraft of had a sword on the rudder, but the CAG bird had multi colored diamonds running the length of the blade. The last two digits of the modex number on the rudder had an unusual one-on-top-of-the-other layout, which was common for all the aircraft of the squadron. The transport pod seen on the inboard pylon also had a sword similar to that on the fuselage and on the rudder. The ECM blister on the fin cap was painted yellow and had CVW-1 written on it, that was a feature unique to the CAG bird. The illustration of Modex #200 also indicates that still the VF-32 would have aircraft with both AN/ALQ-30 and AN/ALE-25 chin pods.

## 1971-1972

### **Deployment:**

*Nov. 18<sup>th</sup>, 1971 to May 10<sup>th</sup>, 1972 (Mediterranean Sea)*

*Sep. 1972 to Oct. 6<sup>th</sup>, 1972 (North Atlantic)*

*USS John F. Kennedy (CVA-67)*



*Figur 10: F-4B Phantom, VF-14 "Tophatters", CVW-1, 1972. Modex #110 BuNo 149460*



*Figur 11: F-4B Phantom of VF-32 "Swordsmen", CVW-1, 1972, Modex #214, BuNo 149459 (note! The aircraft name "Tina Marie" on the splitter plate)*

For the 1972 deployment (started in Nov. 1971) the Tophatters again changed their paint scheme, this time radically. Again placing a flash on the intake with a white circle and the Top hat logo. The vertical stabilizer featured a large red chevron, and the AB tailcode. The Tailcode had the same style that was introduced in 1968, with 90 degree corners on the letter A and the standard US NAVY font on the letter B. With respect to the following year of 1973, the placement of the tailcode is worth noticing.

Structurally not much had changed, almost all the squadrons aircraft had the AN/ALE-25 chin pod at this point. Which also was the case for the Swordsmens aircraft. Their paintscheme had changed very little from the previous deployment. The most significant change was the cockpit rails and frame that now have become black. But more subtle changes had been made. The pilot and RIO names would be written in yellow on the black background, but the PC names would be in black letters on a yellow background on the splitter plate. Modex #214 would stand out as being named, as one of very few US NAVY aircraft from this period. The story behind the name Tina Marie is unknown but BuNo 149459 sports the name on the splitter plate.

For both squadrons the AN/ALQ-25 chin pod from the Shoehorn update had become almost exclusively used. This would however be the very last deployment that would be the case. On the subsequent deployment, both squadrons would change to the smooth chin pod associated with the introduction of the AN/APR-45 and AN/ALR-50 Charger Blue data receiving set.

## 1973

### **Deployment:**

*Apr. 16<sup>th</sup>, 1973 to Dec. 1<sup>st</sup>, 1973 (Mediterranean Sea)*

*USS John F. Kennedy (CVA-67)*



*Figur 12: F-4B Phantom, VF-14 "Tophatters", CVW-1, 1973. Modex #000 BuNo 152326 (This aircraft had Mode number #112 up until very close to transitioning to F-14 Tomcat).*



*Figur 13: F-4B Phantom of VF-32 "Swordsmen", CVW-1, 1973, Modex #200, BuNo 151510*

For the very last time VF-14 made a change to their paint scheme in 1973. Although the paint scheme was very similar to the one introduced in 1968, there's some differences: Most noticeable is the Chevron on the vertical stabilizer that not extend on to the rudder, leaving that completely white. The tailcode have been moved downward, but retains the same style as described above. Other than than, this aircraft has an unusual "Triple nuts" modex number. The reason for that is unknown to the author. But theres reasons to believe this aircraft had the modex number chaged after the deployment, since BuNo 152326 had modex number 114 while at sea aboard USS John F. Kennedy (CVA-67)

Shortly after the return from the deployment, VF-14 would trade their F-4Bs for F-14A Tomcats, which was operated for nearly 30 years before transitioning to FA-18E Super Hornets, which they operate to this day.

VF-32 also made some last minute changes to their paint scheme, actually almost all of the markings were changed for this very last deployment. Modex numbers and squadron designations were added in a different font, with slanted letters with 90 degree corners. The sword on the fuselage spine was removed and the tailcode were rearranged so it resembled the layout that were used by VF-14. All aircraft in the squadron had a safety "S" on the fuselage spine, in the same font and size as the squadron designation. The CAG bird as illustrated here, didn't carry any special markings as it had done previously in the swordsmens history. Along with VF-32s sister squadron the swordsmen traded their F-4Bs for the F-14A Tomcat, which the squadron continuously operated until being redesignated to VFA-32 in 2007 when the first FA-18F arrived.

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